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SUBJECT: PRESS BULLETIN - February 9, 2009

#### Opinions/Editorials

[¶1.](#) Let's Not Let Assessments Hinder Denuclearization  
(Hankyoreh Shinmun, February 9, 2009, Page 23)

#### Features

[¶2.](#) U.S. Experts Recount Visit to Korea  
(Chosun Ilbo, February 9, 2009, Page 6) 2

[¶3.](#) Washington's First Diplomatic Homework is Afghanistan... What Kind of Homework Will It Become for ROK?  
(Dong-a Ilbo, February 7, 2009, Page 3) 3

[¶4.](#) "NK Wants Direct Talks with Obama"  
(JoongAang Ilbo, February 9, 2009, Page 2)  
Top Headlines

Chosun IlboYangyang Airport in Gangwon Province, Built at a Cost of 350 Billion Won, Has Had No Passengers for 99 Consecutive Days, a Testimony to Reckless and Inefficient ROKG Airport Projects

JoongAng Ilbo

JoongAng Ilbo Campaign Launched to Help Job Seekers

"Find Jobs"

Dong-a Ilbo

Korea Electric Power Corp. Plans to Fire Poorly Performing Staff for First Time in Its History

Hankook Ilbo

New Economic Team to Draw Up Supplementary Budget of More Than 10 Trillion Won Next Month

Hankyoreh Shinmun

Unification Minister-Designate Suspected of Tax Evasion and Dubious Real Estate Transactions

Segye Ilbo, All TVs

Water Shortage Woes Worsening in Gangwon Province

Seoul Shinmun

Local Governments Lack Money to Fund Economy-Boosting Policies

#### International News

[¶1.](#) A group of U.S. experts, including former U.S. Ambassador to the ROK Stephen Bosworth, said in Beijing on Feb. 7 upon their return from a Feb. 3-7 visit to North Korea that the North seems to prefer direct talks with the U.S. to the Six-Party Talks to end North Korea's nuclear programs. (All)

¶2. Vice President Joe Biden was quoted as saying in a Feb. 7 speech in Munich, Germany: "As we seek a lasting framework for our common struggle against extremism, we will have to work cooperatively with nations around the world - and we will need your help." (Dong-a, Hankook) This remark may indicate that the Obama Administration will call on U.S. allies to more proactively share responsibility for the U.S.-led anti-terror war. (Dong-a)  
Media Analysis

#### Secretary of State Clinton's Visit to Seoul

Conservative Dong-a Ilbo carried an inside-page report on Saturday (Feb. 7) saying that there is a possibility that Secretary of State Hillary Clinton might raise the issue of the ROK's additional troop deployment to Afghanistan during her Feb. 19-20 visit to Seoul. To bear this out, Dong-a noted that Secretary Clinton raised the troop deployment issue when she met with her British and German counterparts on Feb. 3, and quoted a State Department official as saying: "The Secretary will discuss ways to boost international cooperation in Seoul." Dong-a headlined its story: "Washington's First Diplomatic Homework is Afghanistan... What Kind of Homework Will It Become for ROK?"

#### North Korea

The ROK media gave prominent coverage to Feb. 7 press remarks in Beijing by a group of U.S. experts who traveled to North Korea from Feb. 3-7. Jonathan Pollack, a professor of Asian and Pacific Studies at the U.S. Naval War College, was widely quoted as telling reporters: "North Korea seems to prefer direct talks with the U.S. to the Six-Party Talks to end its nuclear programs." Former U.S. Ambassador to the ROK Stephen Bosworth was also quoted as saying: "When we indicated there was concern that North Korea might be preparing for a missile launch, North Korean officials neither confirmed nor denied any such plans, only saying that we should all wait and see."

The ROK media on Saturday (Feb. 7) gave wide attention to CIA Director-designate Leon Panetta's written statement to a Feb. 5 Senate Intelligence Committee hearing that North Korea "detonated a nuclear weapon" in a 2006 nuclear test. Noting that the U.S. has long downplayed the North's 2006 nuclear test as an explosion of a "nuclear device" and has avoided publicly describing it as a full-fledged nuclear weapon, the ROK media wondered if the U.S. may be poised to acknowledge the North as a de facto nuclear power. In particular, left-leaning Hankyoreh Shinmun editorialized: "The Barack Obama Administration, more than any other that came before, has been unequivocal in pursuing a world without nuclear weapons. Accordingly, it is difficult to imagine the Obama Administration accepting North Korea's nuclear weapons and changing the goals of its policy on North Korea to something like preventing proliferation. What is clear now is that Pyongyang has the intention and ability to develop nuclear weapons... and this ability will grow as time passes. As such, efforts to remove North Korea's nuclear weapons are far more important than making an assessment in which truth and falsehood are difficult to distinguish. Mistaken assessments must not become the justification for unilateral actions, as occurred with the U.S. invasion of Iraq, but even if the information is insufficient, that should not lead to wavering in our ultimate goal of nuclear disarmament."

#### International Security - Munich Conference

Conservative Dong-a Ilbo and moderate Hankook Ilbo carried a quote from Vice President Joe Biden, who said in a Feb. 7 speech in Munich, Germany: "As we seek a lasting framework for our common struggle against extremism, we will have to work cooperatively with nations around the world - and we will need your help." Dong-a interpreted this as indicating that the Obama Administration would call on U.S. allies to more proactively share responsibility for the U.S.-led war on terror.

#### Opinions/Editorials

Let's Not Let Assessments Hinder Denuclearization  
(Hankyoreh Shinmun, February 9, 2009, Page 23)

Leon Panetta, the nominee for Director of the United States Central Intelligence Agency, said in a Senate confirmation hearing the day before yesterday that "North Korea detonated a nuclear weapon in 2006." This is a different expression from the "detonation of a nuclear device" that the U.S. government has been talking about thus

far. In a separate report published late last year by the Joint Chiefs of Staff in the U.S. Defense Department and the National Intelligence Council, North Korea was designated for the first time as a nuclear weapon state, and Secretary of Defense Robert Gates subsequently wrote a contribution to Foreign Affairs stating, "North Korea has built several bombs."

It does not appear that this assessment by U.S. military and intelligence organizations is connected with changes in government-level policy toward North Korea's nuclear program. This is because the framework for U.S. nuclear policy must change completely if North Korea is formally acknowledged as a nuclear weapon state, shaking the foundation of the Six-Party Talks. The currently operating Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty system recognizes only five countries as nuclear weapon states -- the United States, Russia, China, the United Kingdom and France -- and gives them privileges such as exemption from inspection. The Barack Obama Administration, more than any other that came before, has been clearly aiming at a world without nuclear weapons. It is difficult to imagine the Obama Administration accepting North Korea's nuclear weapons and changing the goals of its policy on North Korea's nuclear program to something like preventing proliferation.

But there are two possible explanations for this change in terminology regarding the reality of North Korea's nuclear program. One is that it was done for security reasons, stating that a readiness posture is necessary under the assumption that North Korea has nuclear weapons. The other is that assessments of North Korea's nuclear capabilities have become gradually more realistic since the latter half of last year. The George W. Bush Administration tended to downplay the possibilities of North Korea possessing nuclear weapons in order to avoid acknowledging the failure of its North Korea policy.

At this point, only North Korea knows the precise reality of its nuclear capabilities. What is clear is that Pyongyang has the intention and ability to develop nuclear weapons and has realized this to a considerable extent, and that this ability will grow as time passes. As such, efforts to abolish nuclear weapons are far more important than making an assessment in which truth and falsehood are difficult to distinguish. Mistaken assessments must not become the justification for unilateral actions, as occurred with the U.S. invasion of Iraq, but even if the information is insufficient, that should not lead to wavering in the ultimate goal of nuclear disarmament.

Efforts toward the real denuclearization of North Korea could effectively be said to start now. The Obama Administration must quickly finish reexamining the U.S. policy toward North Korea and proceed into action with a sense of urgency. It goes without saying that our government as well must strengthen its activities so that the Six-Party Talks and North Korea-U.S. negotiations proceed effectively.

\* This is a translation provided by the newspaper, and it is identical to the Korean version.

#### Features

U.S. Experts Recount Visit to Korea  
(Chosun Ilbo, February 9, 2009, Page 6)

By Reporter Park Seung-joon

American experts on North Korean affairs, including former U.S. Ambassador to Seoul Stephen Bosworth, are on their way home via Beijing after wrapping up a visit to the North that ran from Feb. 3 to Feb. 7. It was the first civilian contact between the U.S. and North Korea since the inauguration of the Obama Administration. The group consisted of seven members, including Bosworth, Jonathan Pollack, an East Asia security expert at the U.S. Naval War College, Leon Sigal, the Director of the Northeast Asia Cooperative Security Project, and Morton Abramowitz, the former Assistant Secretary of State.

They were in Pyongyang for five days, during which time they met North Korean officials such as chief nuclear negotiator Kim Kye-gwan to exchange views on direct talks between Pyongyang and Washington and the North Korean nuclear issue.

"They said we should all wait and see," Bosworth said. "There were no threats, no indication that they were concerned. They treated the missile issue as just a normal run-of-the-mill issue." He was referring to apparent plans by the North to test-launch ballistic missiles.

He said he felt that North Korea was preparing for both Six-Party Talks and bilateral talks between Washington and Pyongyang, adding there is no reason for the Obama Administration to avoid direct talks.

He said the group came away with the impression that the North wants to continue the nuclear disablement process. "We concluded that the outlook is that we can continue to move forward," he said.

Pollack, meanwhile, said, "I got an impression that North Korea prefers direct talks with Washington to multilateral talks, even though it is well aware of the importance of the Six-Party Talks." North Korean officials did not seem to expect quick progress or any breakthrough in the Six-Party Talks.

The visiting group said that the health issue of North Korean leader, Kim Jong-il was not mentioned at all during the visit, also adding that since it was a civilian visit, they did not have any message from President Obama to North Korea, or vice versa.

\* We have compared the English version on the website with the Korean version and made some changes to make them identical.

Washington's First Diplomatic Homework is Afghanistan... What Kind of Homework Will It Become for ROK?  
(Dong-a Ilbo, February 7, 2009, Page 3)  
By Reporter Kim Young-sik

U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton will visit the ROK on February 19-20 to attend a meeting with the ROK foreign minister and to pay a courtesy call to President Lee Myung-bak. Since the new U.S. administration is in its initial days, the ROKG explains, Secretary Clinton is expected to listen to the opinions of allies, rather than having detailed discussion on specific issues. However, the ROK has concerns because there is a possibility that during her visit, Secretary Clinton may raise the issue of Seoul's aid to Afghanistan. When Secretary Clinton met with her British and German counterparts on February 3, she mentioned additional troop dispatch to Afghanistan, and the Department of State also said, "In Seoul, Secretary Clinton will meet with senior leaders to discuss our expanding global cooperative partnership with our ally, the Republic of Korea."

#### Washington's Afghanistan initiative and Seoul's response

In addition to a U.S. troop pullout from Iraq, turning around the situation in Afghanistan is cited by U.S. President Barack Obama as one of the priorities of his foreign military policy. Secretary of Defense Robert Gates also said at a January 27 hearing of the Senate Armed Services Committee, "There is little doubt that our greatest military challenge right now is Afghanistan." Therefore, the U.S. is desperate for cooperation from its allies and partners. This is why the ROKG does not rule out the possibility that the U.S. may ask for the deployment of ROK combat troops.

An expert, who has recently returned from Washington, noted on February 6, "Each U.S. government agency has different demands to the ROK," adding, "The Department of Defense said that it hopes the ROK will 'come in combat boots,' and the Department of State said that the ROK could 'come in men's shoes.'"

An ROKG source explained, "The reason why a government team led by Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Lee Yong-joon, conducted a fact-finding mission on the activities of Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRT) in Afghanistan is to come up with countermeasures in view of Washington's policy priorities and the global situation."

For the moment, the ROKG's position is to contribute to Afghan reconstruction efforts by expanding the PRTs, which are mainly led by civilians. Seoul plans to increase the number of PRT personnel at medical and vocational training centers in Bagram Air Force Base

and to send people to help train police and firefighters.

This takes into account a growing voice in the Pentagon for a revision of the U.S.'s Afghan strategy. In the situation where Washington's response to the Afghan war can change at any time, Seoul judges that any talk of troop dispatch is too hasty.

Professor Yoon Duk-min of the Institute of Foreign Affairs and National Security said, "For now, it is more appropriate for the ROK to show willingness to provide help (to the U.S. efforts in Afghanistan) as an ally than to make specific promises."

"NK Wants Direct Talks with Obama"  
(JoongAang Ilbo, February 9, 2009, Page 2)

Former U.S. high-ranking officials and American experts on North Korean affairs including former Assistant Secretary of State Morton Abramowitz came to Seoul on Feb. 8 after their visit to Pyongyang. They said, "North Korea wants direct talks with the Obama Administration and expects a change in the new administration's policy toward North Korea." After his visit to North Korea with 6 members including former U.S. Ambassador to Seoul Stephen Bosworth, Abramowitz said, "We exchanged views on overall U.S-NK relations several times with the North Korean Foreign Ministry officials, military personnel and economic bureaucrats during a five-day visit to Pyongyang that started from Feb. 3."

Jonathan Pollack, professor at the U.S. Naval War College said, "I got an impression that North Korea prefers direct talks with Washington to the multilateral Six-Party Talks." Regarding North Korea's preparations to test-fire missiles, he said that North Korea is not in a hurry and the missile launch is not likely to happen soon.

This visit by former Ambassador Bosworth grabbed attention as the first visit to North Korea paid by officials closely related to the Obama Administration since the inauguration of the new administration. Former Assistant Secretary of State Abramowitz said, "This was a civilian visit and thus we did not have any message from President Obama or deliver any invitation to the North Korean officials. Tony Namkung, an Advisor to the Governor of New Mexico added, "We will brief the ROKG officials on discussions made during the visit." The visiting group that arrived in Seoul via Beijing is scheduled to depart to Japan on Feb. 9.

Stephens

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